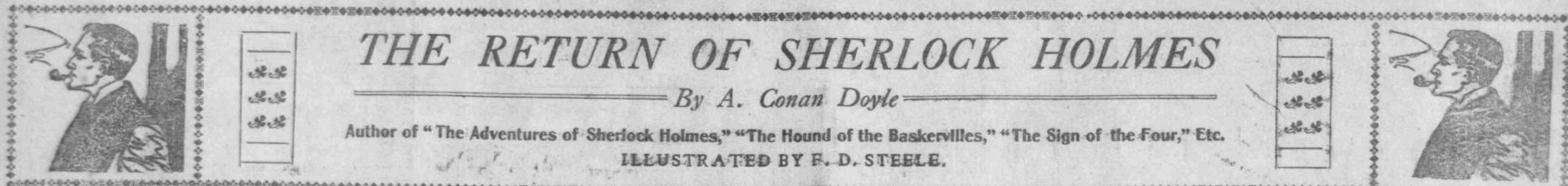
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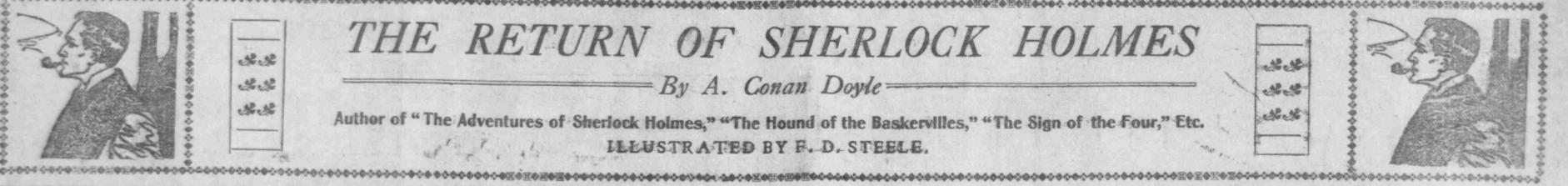
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THE RETURN OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

= By A. Conan Doyle ==

Author of "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes," "The Hound of the Baskervilles," "The Sign of the Four," Etc. ILLUSTRATED BY F. D. STEELE.

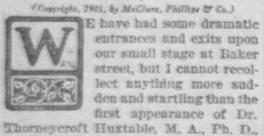




The Adventure of the Priory School

No. 5 of the Series

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etc. His card, which seemed too small to earry the weight of his academic distinctions, preceded him by a few seconds, and then he entered himself, so large, so pompous and so dignified that he was the very embodiment of self possession and solidity. And yet his first action when the door had closed behind him was to stagger against the table, whence he slipped down upon the floor, and there was that majestic figure prostrate and insensible upon our bearskin hearth rug.

We had sprung to our feet, and for a few moments we stared in silent amazement at this ponderous piece of wreckage, which told of some sudden and fatal storm far out on the ocean of life. Then Holmes hurried with a cushion for his head and I with brandy for his lips. The heavy, white face was seamed with lines of trouble; the hang-

ing pouches under the closed eyes were leaden in color; the loose mouth drooped dolorously at the corners; the rolldng chins were unshaven. Collar and shirt bore the grime of a long journey. stricken man who lay before us.

finger on the thready pulse, where the services."

is not 12 o'clock yet. He has certainly lucidity to explain the situation.

his face crimson with shame.

no telegram would convince you of the absolute urgency of the case."

"When you are quite restored"-"I am quite well again. I cannot kleton with me by the next train."

My friend shook his head. "My colleague, Dr. Watson, could tell I am retained in this case of the Ferrers documents, and the Abergavenny London at present."

"What! The late cabinet minister?" It might have reached your ears."

cyclopaedia of reference.

P. C.'-half the alphabet! 'Baron Bev- ently absolutely happy, list! Lord lieutenant of Hallamshire May 13-that is, the night of last Mon-grace was extremely desirous to avoid service. If you are telegraphing home, with me at Holdernesse Hall." Terrace: Holdernesse Hall, Hallam- Saltire did not pass out that way. His vestigation?" retary of state for'- Well, well, this could trace no footmarks below, but it once obtained, since a boy and a young like Watson and myself may get a sniff | "It will probably be necessary for man is certainly one of the greatest is sure that this is the only possible man were reported to have been seen of it." subjects of the crown!"



"I CANNOT IMAGINE HOW I CAME TO BE SO WEAK."

"Return ticket from Mackleton, in and bisouits. The light had come back see the marks of his feet where he had the north of England," said Holmes, to his eyes and the color to his cheeks landed on the lawn. His bicycle was "Had he ever one from France?" drawing it from the watch pocket. "It as he set himself with great vigor and kept in a small shed beside this lawn,

ing the beginning of the summer term. you that we are very busy at present. He was a charming youth, and he soon. fell into our ways. I may tell you-I | Sherlock Holmes had listened with trust that I am not indiscreet, but half the utmost intentness to the statement murder is coming up for trial. Only a confidences are absurd in such a case— of the unhappy schoolmaster. His very important issue could call me from that he was not entirely happy at drawn brows and the deep furrow behome. It is an open secret that the tween them showed that he needed no "Important!" Our visitor threw up duke's married life had not been a exhortation to concentrate all his athis hands. "Have you heard nothing peaceful one, and the matter had end- tention upon a problem which, apart of the abduction of the only son of the ed in a separation by mutual consent, from the tremendous interests involved, the duchess taking up her residence in must appeal so directly to his love of with Mr. James Wilder, hes grace's the south of France. This had occurred the complex and the unusual. He now secretary. It was he who gave me the "Exactly. We had tried to keep it very shortly before, and the boy's sym- drew out his notebook and jotted information about Lord Saitire's feelout of the papers, but there was some pathles are known to have been strong- down one or two memoranda. rumor in the Globe last night. I thought ly with his mother. He maped after "You have been very remiss in not "I see. By the way, that last letter her departure from Holdernesse Hall, coming to me sooner," said he severe- of the duke's-was it found in the boy's Holmes shot out his long, thin arm and it was for this reason that the ly. "You start me on my investigation room after he was gone?" and picked out volume "H" in his en- duke desired to send him to my estab- with a very serious handicap. It is "No; he had taken it with him. I lishment. In a fortnight the boy was inconceivable, for example, that this think, Mr. Holmes, it is time that we

erley, earl of Carston'-dear me, what a "He was last seen on the night of "I am not to blame, Mr. Holmes. His quarter of an hour we shall be at your be pleased if you would come and stay since 1900. Married Elith, daughter of day. His room was on the second floor all public scandal. He was afraid of Dr. Huxtable, it would be well to al-Sir Charles Appledore, 1888. Heir and and was approached through another his family unhappiness being dragged low the people in your neighborhood to only child, Lord Saltire. Owns about larger room, in which two boys were before the world. He has a deep hor- imagine that the inquiry is still going it would be wiser for me to remain at 250,000 acres. Minerals in Lancashire sleeping. These boys saw and heard ror of anything of the kind." and Wales. Address, Carlton House nothing, so that it is certain that young "But there has been some official in- red herring led your pack. In the meanshire; Carston castle, Bangor, Wales. window was open, and there is a stout Yes, sir, and it has proved most dis- your own doors, and perhaps the scent give you is, of course, at your dispos-Lord of the admiralty, 1872; chief sec- ivy plant leading to the ground. We appointing. An apparent clew was at is not so cold but that two old hounds al."

sional matters and that you are pre- self fully before going off in his usual have no connection whatever with the when we reached it. A card was lying son?" may tell you, however, that his grace dark gray trousers. There were no my despair and disappointment after a pered something to his master, who has already intimated that a check for signs that any one had entered the sleepless night I came straight to you turned to us with agitation in every £5,000 will be handed over to the per- room, and it is quite certain that any- by the early train." name the man or men who have taken ter, the elder boy in the inner room, is being followed up?"

a very light sleeper, "It is a princely offer," said Holmes. "When Lord Saltire's disappearance "So that three days have been wast- I was, of course, familiar with the "Watson, I think that we shall accom- was discovered, I at once called a roll ed. The affair has been most deplor- pictures of the famous statesman, but is that the child has been kidnaped pany Dr. Huxtable back to the north of the whole establishment-boys, mas- ably handled." of England. And now, Dr. Huxtable, ters and servants. It was then that we | "I feel it and admit it." when you have consumed that milk ascertained that Lord Saltire had not | "And yet the problem should be ca- tall and stately person, scrupulously sort?"

and the hair bristled unkempt from the pened and, finally, what Dr. Thorney room was on the second floor at the well shaped head. It was a sorely croft Huxtable of the Priory school, farther end of the building, facing the "How do you know it was from the near Mackleton, has to do with the same way as Lord Saltire's. His bed father? "What is it, Watson?" asked Holmes. matter and why he comes three days had also been slept in, but he had ap-"Absolute exhaustion, possibly mere after an event-the state of your chin parently gone away partly dressed, velope, and it was addressed in the hunger and fatigue," said I, with my gives the date-to ask for my humble since his shirt and socks were lying duke's peculiar stiff hand. Besides, the on the floor. He had undoubtedly let duke remembers having written." stream of life trickled thin and small. Our visitor had consumed his mills bimself down by the lvy, for we could and it was also gone.

"I must inform you, gentlemen, that | "He had been with me for two of course. Either the boy was carried The puckered eyelids had begun to the Priory is a preparatory school of years and came with the best refer- off by force or he went of his own free quiver, and now a pair of vacant gray which I am the founder and principal. ences, but he was a silent, morose will. In the latter case you would exeyes looked up at us. An instant later 'Huxtable's Side Lights on Horace' man, not very popular either with pect that some prompting from outside the man had scrambled on to his feet, may possibly recall my name to your masters or boys. No trace could be would be needed to make so young a memories. The Priory is without excep found of the fugitives, and now, on lad do such a thing. If he has had "Forgive this weakness, Mr. Holmes. tion the best and most solved prepare. Thursday morning, we are as igno- no visitors, that prompting must have I have been a little overwrought, tory school in England. Lord Lever, rant as we were on Tuesday. Inquiry come in letters; hence I try to find Thank you, if I might have a glass of stoke, the Earl of Blackwater, Sir was, of course, made at once at Holder- out who were his correspondents." milk and a biscuit I have no doubt that Catheart Soames-they all have intrust. nesse Hall. It is only a few miles "I fear I cannot help you much. His I should be better. I came personally, ed their sons to me. But I felt that my away, and we imagined that in some only correspondent, so far as I know. Mr. Holmes, in order to insure that you school had reached its zenith when. sudden attack of homesickness the boy was his own father." would return with me. I feared that three weeks ago, the Duke of Holder, had gone back to his father, but nothing "Who wrote to him on the very day Lord Saltire, ten years old, his only have seen yourselves the state of friendly?" son and heir, was about to be com- nervous prostration to which the sus- "His grace is never very friendly tragine how I came to be so weak. I mitted to my charge. Little did I think pense and the responsibility have reyour life could you have a case which boy in his own way." is more worthy of them."

"Holdernesse, sixth duke, K. G., quite at home with us and was appar- ivy and this lawn would have yielded were leaving for Euston."

nothing to an expert observer."

"It was entirely dropped."

you will kindly tell me what has hap- been alone in his flight. Helderger, the puble of ultimate solution. I shall be cressed, with a drawn, thin face and a "No, sir."

been able to trace any connection between the missing boy and this German master?" "None at all."

"Was he in the master's class?" "No; he never exchanged a word with him so far as I know."

"That is certainly very singular. Had

the boy a bicycle?" "Was any other bicycle missing?"

"No." "Is that certain?"

"Quite." "Well, now, you do not mean to seriously suggest that this German rode off upon a bicycle in the dead of the night, bearing the boy in his arms?"

"Certainly not." "Then what is the theory in your

"The bicycle may have been a blind. It may have been hidden somewhere and the pair gone off on foot." "Quite so, but it seems rather an ab-

surd blind, does it not? Were there other bicycles in this shed?" "Several."

"Would he not have hidden a couple had he desired to give the idea that they had gone off upon them?" "I suppose he would."

"Of course he would. The blind theory won't co. But the incident is an admirable starting point for an investigation. After all, a bicycle is not an early thing to conceal or to destroy. One other question. Did any one call to see the boy on the day before he

"Did be get any letters?"

From when "From his father."

"Do you open the boy's letters?"

"When had he a letter before that?"

"Not for several days."

"No, never." "You see the point of my questions,

nesse sent Mr. James Wilder, his see. had been heard of him. The duke is of his disappearance. Were the relaretary, with the intimation that young greatly agitated, and as to me-you tions between father and son very

wish you, Mr. Holmes, to come to Mac that this would be the prelude to the duced me. Mr. Holmes, if ever you mersed in large public questions and is most crushing misfortune of my life. put forward your full powers I im- rather inaccessible to all ordinary emo-"On May 1 the boy arrived, that be-

"But the sympathies of the latter were with the mother?"

"Yes."

"Did he say so?" "No."

"The duke, then?" "Good heavens, no!"

"Then how could you know?" "I have had some confidential talks

ings."

"I will order a four wheeler. In a on in Liverpool or wherever else that the scene of the mystery."

heavy feature. Come, gentlemen, and I will introduce | ble hesitation.



THE DUKE AND HIS SECRETARY.

by contrast with a long, dwindling curred." over his white waistcoat, with his watch chain gleaming through its day?" fringe. Such was the stately presence who looked stonly at us from the center of Dr. Huntable's hearth rug. Beside him stood a very young man, induced him to take such a step?" whom I understood to be Wilder, the private secretary. He was small, nervous, alert, with intelligent light blue

who at once, in an incisive and positive tone, opened the conversation. was to invite Mr. Sheriock Holmes to the post bag." grace is surprised, Dr. Huxtable, that | them?" you should have taken such a step

without consulting him." "When I learned that the police had

failed"-"His grace is by no means convinced

that the police have failed." "But surely, Mr. Wilder"-"You are well aware, Dr. Huxtable, that his grace is particularly anxious

his confidence." "The matter can be easily remedied,"

the morning train." "Hardly that, doctor; hardly that," said Holmes in his blandest voice. "This northern air is invigorating and pleasant, so I propose to spend a few days upon your moors and to occupy my mind as best I may. Whether I have the shelter of your roof or of the village inn is, of course, for you to de-

I could see that the unfortunate doctor was in the last stage of indecision, from which he was rescued by the deep, sonorous voice of the red hearded duke, which boomed out like a dinner gong.

"I agree with Mr. Wilder, Dr. Huxtable, that you would have done wisely to consult me. But since Mr. Holmes has already been taken into absurd that we should not avail ouring to the inn, Mr. Holmes, I should

"I thank your grace, For the purposes of my investigation I think that

"Just as you like, Mr. Holmes. Any time I will do a little quiet work at information which Mr. Wilder or I can

me to see you at the hall," said leaving a neighboring station by an That evening found us in the cold, Holmes. "I would only ask you now, "The greatest and perhaps the wealth- "His absence was discovered at 7 early train. Only last night we had bracing atmosphere of the Peak counlest. I am aware, Mr. Holmes, that o'clock on Tuesday morning. His bed news that the couple had been hunted try, in which Dr. Huxtable's famous planation in your own mind as to the you take a very high line in profes- had been slept in. He had dressed him- down in Liverpool, and they prove to school is situated. It was already dark mysterious disappearance of your

"No. sir, I bave not." "Excuse me if I allude to that which

is painful to you, but I have no alternative. Do you think that the duchess son who can tell him where his son is thing in the nature of cries or a strug. "The duke is here," said he. "The had anything to do with the matter?" and another thousand to him who can gle would have been heard, since Caun- was relaxed while this false clew was duke and Mr. Wilder are in the study. The great minister showed percepti-

> "I do not think so," he said at last. "The other most obvious explanation the man himself was very different for the purpose of levying ransom. from his representation. He was a You have not had any demand of the

"No; I wrote upon the day before."

"No, sir; certainly not." "Did you post that letter yourself?" The nobleman's reply was interrupt-

eyes and mobile features. It was he ed by his secretary, who broke in with

"I called this morning, Dr. Huxtable, ing letters himself," said he. "This road they must have traversed the too late to prevent you from starting letter was laid with others upon the country to the north of the house or to for London. I learned that your object study table, and I myself put them in the south of the house. That is certain,

"Yes; I observed it." write that day?"

somewhat irrelevant." 'Not entirely," said Holmes.

ued, "I have advised the police to turn | moor, extending for tenumiles and slopto avoid all public scandal. He prefers their attention to the south of France. ing gradually upward. Here, at one to take as few people as possible into I have already said that I do not be- side of this wilderness, is Holdernesse lieve that the duchess would encour- Hall, ten miles by road, but only six age so monstrous an action, but the across the moor. It is a peculiarly dessaid the browbeaten doctor. "Mr. Sher- lad had the most wrong headed opinlock Holmes can return to London by ions, and it is possible that he may have fied to her, aided and abetted by and cattle. Except these, the plover and this German. I think, Dr. Huxtable, that we will now return to the hall." I could see that there were other

questions which Holmes would have wished to put, but the nobleman's abrupt manner showed that the interview was at an end. It was evident that to his intensely aristocratic nature this discussion of his intimate family affairs with a stranger was most abhorrent and that he feared lest every fresh question would throw a fiercer light into the discreetly shadowed corners of his ducal history.

When the nobleman and his secretary had left, my friend flung himself at once with characteristic eagerness into the investigation.

The boy's chamber was carefully exyour confidence it would indeed be amined and yielded nothing save the absolute conviction that it was only selves of his services. Far from go- through the window that he could have dear boy's track! It is his cap!" escaped. The German master's room and effects gave no further clew. In lawn where his heels had come down. found." That one dent in the short green grass was the only material witness left of

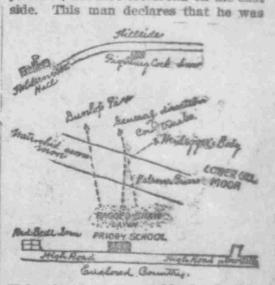
this inexplicable nocturnal flight. my room, where he laid it out on the will certainly get out of them all that bed, and, having balanced the famp they know." in the middle of it, he began to smoke | "So far so good," said-Holmes when over it and occasionally to point out ob- the doctor had at last left the room. ber of his pipe.

points of interest in connection with it, save the arrest of these gypsies. Look In this early stage I want you to realize here, Watson! There is a water course have a good deal to do with our laves- here in the map. In some parts it wigtigation.

is the priory school. I'll put a pin in it. Hall and the school. It is vain to look Now, this line is the main road. You | elsewhere for tracks in this dry weathsee that it runs east and west past the er, and at that point there is certainly school, and you see also that there is a chance of some record being left. I pened, wren it happened, how it hap German master, was missing. His very happy to look into it. Have you pose which was grotesquely curved on Eleventh Page) no side for a mile either way. If -

Was this road. "Exactly."

"By a singular and happy chance we are able to some extent to check what passed along this road during the nighin question. At this point, where my pipe is now resting, a county constable was on duty from 12 to 6. It is, as you perceive, the first crossroad on the east



Holmes' map of the neighborhood of the

not absent from his post for an instant, and he is positive that neither boy nor man could have gone that way unseen. I have spoken with this policeman tonight, and he appears to me to be a perfectly reliable person. That blocks this end. We have now to deal with the other. There is an inn here, the Red Bull, the landlady of which and long. His complexion was of a understand that you wrote to your son | was ill. She had sent to Mackleton for dead pallor, which was more startling upon the day when this incident oc- a doctor, but he did not arrive until morning, being absent at another case. The people at the inn were alert all "Exactly. But he received it on that | night, awaiting his coming, and one or other of them seems to have continually had an eye upon the road. They de-"Was there anything in your letter clare that no one passed. If their eviwhich might have unbalanced him or | dence is good, then we are fortunate enough to be able to block the west and also to be able to say that the fugitives did not use the road at all."

"But the bicycle?" I objected. "Quite so. We will come to the blcycle presently. To continue our reason-"His grace is not in the habit of post ing, if these people did not go by the Let us weigh the one against the other. undertake the conduct of this case. His "You are sure this one was among On the south of the house is, as you perceive, a large district of arable land, cut up into small fields, with stone "How many letters did your grace walls between them. There I admit that a bicycle is impossible. We can "Twenty or thirty. I have a large dismiss the idea. We turn to the councorrespondence. But surely this is try on the north. Here there lies a grove of trees marked as the 'Ragged Shaw, and on the farther side stretch-"For my own part," the duke contin- es a great rolling moor, Lower Gill olate plain. A few moor farmers have small holdings, where they rear sheep the curlew are the only inhabitants until you come to the Chesterfield highroad. There is a church there, you see, as well as a few cottages and an ina. Beyond that the hills become precipitous. Surely it is here to the north that

our quest must lie." "But the bicycle?" I persisted.

"Well, well!" said Holmes impatiently. "A good cyclist does not need a highroad. The moor is intersected with paths, and the moon, was at the full. Hello! What is this?"

There was an agitated knock at the door, and an instant afterward Dr. Huxtable was in the room. In his hand he held a blue cricket cap with a white chevron on the peak.

"At last we have a clew!" he cried. "Thank heaven, at last we are on the

"Where was it found?" "In the van of the gypsies who camp his case a trailer of ivy had given way ed on the moor. They left on Tuesday. under his weight, and we saw by the Today the police traced them down and light of a lantern the mark on the examined their caravan. This was

"How do they account for M?" "They shuffled and lied said that they found it on the moor on Tuesday Sherlock Holmes left the house alone morning. They know where he is, the and only returned after 11. He had rascais! Thank goodness, they are all obtained a large orduance map of the safe under lock and key. Either the neighborhood, and this he brought into fear of the law or the duke's purse

jects of interest with the reeking am- "It at least bears out the theory that it is on the side of the Lower Gill moor "This case grows upon me, Watson," | that we must hope for results. The posaid he. "There are decidedly some lice have really done nothing locally those geographical features which may across the moor. You see it marked ens into a moress. This is particularly "Look at this map. This dark square so in the region between Holdernesse